

# Gloucester City Junior-Senior High School

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## PUBLIC TESTIMONY OF JACK L. DON, PRINCIPAL GLOUCESTER CITY HIGH SCHOOL

High School Graduation Amendments  
State Board of Education  
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Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jack L. Don and I am the Principal of Gloucester City High School.

I know we are here to consider the High School Graduation Amendments. In the last several weeks, I have learned the details of these amendments by attending meetings with the New Jersey Department of Education and through my association, NJPSA. While I'm glad to see the attention focused on our high schools, I'm concerned that we're missing the boat on a critical piece—the lack of a *specific* statewide curriculum.

I've been a principal for many years, and, before that, a teacher, supervisor, and assistant principal. During my combined twenty-nine years in education, I've seen one reform after another, but not one has addressed this issue. As I see it, the big problem is that we have over 600 districts across the state doing their own local curricula. I know that we often point to the Core Curriculum Content Standards, but the truth is that these “standards” are too vague. At the local level, we spend way too much time—and money—interpreting the Core Curriculum Content Standards and trying to apply them in the classroom. Most of the time, we do this in a vacuum. Just when we think we start making progress, the rules change—like moving from HSPA to these “competency-based assessments.”

None of the new High School Graduation Requirements remedy these problems. Instead, I see new requirements, such as Algebra II. Well what exactly does “Algebra II” mean? Putting aside whether Algebra II should, or should not, be required—who is going to set up a road map for getting our students there? Is the state simply going to require it and let over 600 school districts figure it out by themselves? This is the way we've been doing business all along and it's not working.

I would like to see the *state* create the road map to get all students to meet the Core Curriculum Content Standards from kindergarten through twelfth grade. We need to start long before high school if we want all students to succeed. Let's make sure that we're aligning the standards among all grades and that we're



everything—from the textbooks we use to the tests we administer. I feel like the state is always hiding the ball from educators about what's expected and I believe the way to fix this problem is by drafting a statewide K-12 curriculum.

This is the kind of reform I would like to see, and my goal with speaking to you today is to make the case for its serious consideration. If we want to increase efficiency and implement true reform, let's take out the local guesswork of drafting a curriculum, align our standards statewide, and support our schools with their true goal of educating students.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.